

The Builder.

No. CCCXXIX.

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1849.



SEVERAL points of considerable interest, as respects our antiquities and the history of architecture, were discussed at some length at the last meeting of the Institute of Architects, held on the 21st inst. The conversation began with the announcement of donations, and ran on till the meeting was adjourned. Mr. Donaldson, who took once more his old seat as one of the secretaries, commented in his usually good-natured, rose-coloured way on the various books and drawings which were presented (including a new work by Mr. Fergusson, on fortification, Mr. Brandon's nice volume of parish churches, the second collection of sketches issued by the Architectural Publication Society,* and a drawing by the late Mr. Dance, giving the measurements of old London-bridge), and did not omit a few words of commendation, afterwards repeated by the chairman (Mr. Bellamy), of the first part of our "Buildings and Monuments." A little volume relative to the city antiquities, the secretary said he should leave in the author's own hands, in order that he might make some statements on the subject. Accordingly up got Mr. Tite, and presented "A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities found in the Excavations at the new Royal Exchange, preserved in the Museum of the Corporation of London,"† and he did so in order that he might remark how easily public bodies might be impugned without cause, and to show that the citizens of London had never been unmindful of their antiquities, even at a time when they were held in little esteem elsewhere. The catalogue itself, the speaker said, was written by Mr. Thompson, of the London Institution, but the introductory essay was written by himself, and he would read a few passages to show, first, that he did not consider Roman London was so important a place as some believe; and secondly, to answer what he thought the inconsiderate and gross attacks which had been made on the officers of the corporation.

The chairman took the same view, and said Mr. Tite's book would have the effect of disabusing the public mind; and if for that effort alone, could not be too much applauded. He afterwards made some observations as to the universally erroneous nature of the statements of the periodical press, which it would be difficult to maintain. As to the "city" question there are certainly two opinions upon it. It will be remembered that it was the subject of a sharp correspondence in our pages some time ago, between Mr. Tite and Mr. C. Roach Smith; and as the corporation book will probably not get into the hands of many of our readers, we turn to it and give the portions which were read.

Speaking of the first collection of London antiquities, the author says,—

"These relics must always possess a con-

siderable intrinsic value as illustrations of society and manners, and also a peculiar local interest, as indicating the condition of the place and people where they were found: though they cannot always be implicitly relied on as conclusive evidence of the nature of the buildings formerly standing on the spots where such antiquities were discovered.

The Tradescant family is usually regarded as having formed the first considerable collection of natural and artificial curiosities in England; but, with the exception of coins, only six Roman articles occur in the catalogue of the Museum published by John Tradescant, junior, in 1656, and only one of these is distinguished with the name of the place where it was found. After the collection passed into the possession of Elian Ashmole, it was very considerably increased; and, as it was not transmitted to Oxford until 1692, he probably added to it many specimens of London antiquities discovered after the great fire.

From the time of the rebuilding of the city, the importance of preserving such relics, especially Roman remains, appears to have begun to be rightly perceived; and one of the first and most successful collectors of such specimens was Mr. John Coniers, an apothecary of London, who was living at the period. By his researches and industry were brought together most of those numerous Roman vessels and articles of every kind which afterwards formed the extraordinary museum of Dr. John Woodward, who bought the principal part of the collection. After his death in 1728, such parts of his museum as were not bought by the University of Cambridge were sold by auction at Mr. Cooper's, in the Great Piazza, Covent Garden, in a thirty-three days' sale, the last three of which were occupied by the celebrated Roman shield and the miscellaneous antiquities.‡

Three other contemporaneous collectors of London antiquities were Dr. Harwood, John Bagford, a bookseller, and John Kemp.

"From the time of these original preservers of London antiquities, the custom of observing and recording their discovery appears to have generally commenced, with more or less of intelligence and accuracy in the description and delineation of such remains. At the present time, however, the practice has been long since established in a highly improved form; and the reports which are now so frequently published, in illustration of the ancient relics of all periods, often exhibit such an amount and variety of antiquarian learning as seemed in the last century to be almost unknown. This increased intimacy with the nature and value of antiquities has led to their more careful preservation and better exhibition, as well in public local depositories as in private collections. One of the former is the museum established in connection with the Corporation Library at Guildhall, for the reception of antiquities relating to London, especially such as may be discovered in the execution of civic public improvements, which it is certain cannot rightly belong to any other depository."

The author says, in concluding his "attempt to illustrate a series of antiquities, full of interest at the present time as being the types of places and manners long since departed,"—

"It has been also attempted in this sketch to show that the citizens of London have never been unmindful of their ancient civic remains; and even in times when such memorials were held in little estimation, and the nation had no national museum, they possessed in Gresham College not only such a receptacle, but apparently a niche for local antiquities. The liberal willingness with which every suggestion has been met, with reference to the preservation of these relics, also shows the inconsiderate injustice of those gross attacks on the corporation and its officers in this respect, which are so constantly made, and which it is impossible to reconcile either to candour or to truth."

We must leave this to those who are personally concerned, but are compelled to admit a strong impression that the corporation, as a body, have done grievously little towards the preservation and collection of their antiquities, whatever they may be disposed to do now.

To confine ourselves, however, to the proceedings of the meeting. Mr. John W. Papworth then read the conclusion of his paper on some features of the connection between the architecture and chronology of Egypt, with an account of Le Sueur's essay "On the Chronology of Egypt, illustrated by its Monuments." Afterwards Mr. Papworth laid before the meeting the opinions of the learned Dr. Lepsius, "On the relation of the later Egyptian orders and the Greek column," and as the discussion which followed referred chiefly to this, we must for the most part confine ourselves at this moment to it. We give the reader's own words.

I hope to be excused, he said, if I venture to add what Lepsius himself says on the subject, at the end of the valuable paper which I have so often quoted, containing the grounds for the conclusion, in which he is supported by the authority of Barry and Jomard,—a conclusion in which I humbly concur, although for very different reasons to those which he gives as the steps by which he attains his object; and I beg it may be understood, that what I am about to read are his opinions, and not mine.

At the first glance, says Lepsius, it is evident that the division of the Greek column into base, shaft, capital, and abacus, supposes more than a natural analogy founded upon mathematical laws, or the practice of architecture in general, and consequently necessarily seen wherever there is an architecture with ceilings, and supports to those ceilings.

To vain will "historic relations" be denied; they are relations which manifest themselves the more that the several parts are taken into consideration.

To commence with the capital: we have no need to go further than that of the Corinthian order, to find, with Jomard, its type in the Egyptian leafy capitals."

The echinus of the Doric order corresponds altogether as evidently with the large expanded calyx of Egyptian columns. This is not only proved by the analogy of the principal forms, but also by the ornament, which, according to Semper's researches, appears to have been generally painted, but of which we have seen one sculptured example in the columns of the great Portico and of the small Temple at Paestum.

So, too, the colors of these ornaments, which are blue and red, with green leaves interposed, are the same which are ordinarily employed in Egyptian columns. But that which appeared to Lepsius decisive for his connection of the calyx cap with the Greek echinus, was the existence of the listels, or annulets, below the echinus, and the groove so often seen at the necking or hypotrachelion of the Doric and other columns. These listels, or annulets, he thought, evidently corresponded with the Egyptian ribbons which tie the bundles of stems, and which annulets are generally found three in number, or, as at the Parthenon and elsewhere, so many as five, the ordinary number of Egyptian bands.

Above the plant-capital we have the abacus, square in Greece as in Egypt, with the single difference that, while the Egyptian die remains of the same width with the architrave, the Greek abacus advances beyond it.

Other points of relationship present themselves in the shafts of the columns. Here we recall the entasis, corresponding exactly to that of the Egyptian plant column, which also finds itself greatest at one-third of its height in many cases, but frequently, nay, generally, lower, at one-seventh, which indeed agrees better with the swelling of the aquatic plants which it was the intention to imitate.

In saying of channelling—that habitual ornament of the three Greek orders—that it is never wanting in the Doric (the Roman and Etruscan examples are not forgotten), the temple at Segeste might be cited as a contradiction; but then this has never been finished, as is evident from the cases in the great temples at Eleusis and Rhamnus, and from those at Delos and Thoricus, all which have the channelling at top and bottom, because the remainder was to have been worked in place.

* The second part issued by the Architectural Publication Society is full of valuable hints. We will look to it next week.

† Preceded by an introduction, containing an account of these discoveries, with some particulars and suggestions relating to Roman London. By W. Tite, F.R.S., F.S.A., Architect of the Royal Exchange. Printed for the use of the Corporation of the City of London.

* The preceding paper mentioned several capitals as being probably borrowed from the Corinthian capital in the Ptolemaic period.—Ed.